

Message Text

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INFO ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO VIA POUCH

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TAGS: CASC, MX

SUBJECT: PROPOSED HUNGER STRIKE BY PRISONERS-VISITS TO
SANTA MARTA AND NORTE

REF: MEXICO 11320

1. CONSUL GENERAL AND CHIEF OF CONSULAR SECTION VISITED SANTA MARTA PENITENTIARY AND RECLUSORIO DEL NORTE SEPTEMBER 3. SCA DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR DE WITT AND CONSUL MORROW ACCOMPANIED ON VISIT TO SANTA MARTA; VICE CONSULS LAUDERDALE AND SILBER TO NORTE.

2. AT SANTA MARTA DIRECTOR WAS NOT AVAILABLE TO MEET THE GROUP, BUT HAD MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO ASSEMBLE ALL AMERICAN PRISONERS IN AUDITORIUM. PRISONERS WERE DIVIDED INTO TWO GROUPS OF 25 TO 27 EACH. MEETINGS WITH BOTH GROUPS WERE FAIRLY HOT SESSIONS, WITH MOST OUTSPOKEN PRISONERS AGGRESSIVELY PRESSING THE OLD CHARGES THAT THE USG IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR IMPRISONMENT, RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR LONG SENTENCES, AND HAS DONE NOTHING TO HELP THEM. BY THE END OF EACH SESSION, PRISONERS HAD CALMED DOWN; SOME APOLOGIZED FOR THE LANGUAGE AND TONE EMPLOYED, ATTRIBUTING IT TO THE NEED TO LET OFF STEAM.

3. LEADERS OF THE HUNGER STRIKE AT SANTA MARTA CLAIM 100 PERCENT SUPPORT FOR THE STRIKE, AND IN GENERAL, THE GROUPS OF PRISONERS APPEARED ENTIRELY UNCONVINCED BY ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE STRIKE. HOWEVER, ONE PRISONER PRIVATELY COMMENTED

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THAT MOST PRISONERS WILL PRETEND TO PARTICIPATE IN STRIKE BUT

WILL BE EATING IN SECRET.

4. VISIT TO RECLUSORIO DEL NORTE INCLUDED FRUITFUL DISCUSSION WITH DIRECTOR, LIC. SANCHEZ GALINDO, WHO APPEARS ANXIOUS TO MEET ANY REASONABLE REQUEST EMBASSY MAKES ON BEHALF OF AMCIT PRISONERS. MEETING WITH THE 19 U.S. PRISONERS, HOWEVER, WAS ALMOST AS DIFFICULT AS AT SANTA MARTA, ALTHOUGH NOT AS STORMY.

5. AT ALL THREE MEN'S PRISONS IN MEXICO CITY, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF PRISONERS APPEAR DETERMINED TO BEGIN THE HUNGER STRIKE, BUT IT IS UNKNOWN WHAT PERCENTAGE WILL PURSUE IT SERIOUSLY. IN ALL THREE MEN'S PRISONS, THE BASIC THRUST OF THE STRIKE IS TO ATTRACT SUFFICIENT PUBLICITY FOR THEIR CAUSE TO FORCE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT INTO SOME ACTION THAT WOULD PERSUADE THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT TO RELEASE THEM. AMONG THE ACTIONS CITED BY THE PRISONERS AS EXAMPLES OF WHAT THE USG MIGHT DO IS SECRETARY KISSINGER'S STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN SANTIAGO, WHICH THEY CLAIM RESULTED IN THE RELEASE OF 200 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN CHILE. ANOTHER IS AN INCIDENT ALLEGEDLY OCCURRING IN 1971, IN WHICH THE USG, IN ORDER TO PRESSURE MEXICO INTO AGREEING TO THE DRUG INTERDICTION CAMPAIGN, IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE CLOSED THE U.S.-MEXICAN BORDER FOR THREE DAYS, THEREBY ACHIEVING THE DESIRED RESULT.

6. ALTHOUGH THE CIRCULAR LETTER PROPOSING THE STRIKE STATES THAT THE PURPOSE IS TO HASTEN THE AGREEMENT ON THE TRANSFER OF SANCTIONS PROPOSAL, THIS APPEARS TO BE NOT THE TRUE AIM OF THE MEN PRISONERS HERE. ALTHOUGH MOST OF THEM WOULD ACCEPT THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO HOME, THEY APPEAR UNANIMOUS IN BELIEVING THAT AN ARRANGEMENT FOR TRANSFER OF SANCTIONS WHICH FAILED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE VIOLATIONS OF RIGHTS WHICH THEY HAVE SUFFERED HERE WOULD BE INJUST. THEY ARE AT ONCE POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED, IN THEIR AWARENESS OF HOW TO BRING PRESSURE UPON THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT, AND POLITICALLY NAIVE, IN THEIR CONVICTION THAT THE USG MIGHT EASILY OBTAIN THEIR RELEASE IF IT CHOSE TO DO SO.

7. EMBASSY HAS DISCUSSED WITH DIRECTORS OF THREE PRISONS (AND SUB-DIRECTOR OF SANTA MARTA) QUESTION OF HOW THE STRIKE
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WILL BE HANDLED, AND WILL CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS WITH UNDERSECRETARY OF GOBERNACION GARCIA RAMIREZ. SO FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE, NO DIRECTOR PLANS SEVERE DISCIPLINARY MEASURES AGAINST THE STRIKERS, BUT SOME ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE REACTION OF OTHER PRISONERS, AND THE ADVERSE PUBLIC REACTION HERE THAT COULD LESSEN SUPPORT WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE PROGRESSIVE MEASURES THAT HAVE RECENTLY BEEN TAKEN BY THE GOM, SUCH AS THE PRISONER EXHCANGE PROPOSAL, THE MOVES TOWARD

PRISON REFORM WITHIN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, AND THE SPECIAL
MEASURES THAT HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY GARCIA RAMIREZ TO BENEFIT
AMERICAN PRISONERS.
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